

San Diego with Kids - Top Family-Friendly Attractions

San Diego, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: San Diego is a wonderful place for family vacation. Not only there are plenty of family-friendly attractions from zoo, aquarium, theme park and museum but the city itself is beautiful and family can enjoy a great nature from beach to nature park.

This guide is created by Amy @ The Q Family, a family travel blogger for The Q Family Adventures Travel blog.

TheQFamilyAdventures.com is a family friendly travel blog that helps inspire family to travel one adventure at a time.



My List

contact:

tel: +1 619 239 0512 http://www.balboapark.org

location:

1549 El Prado San Diego CA 92101



Balboa Park

DESCRIPTION: The world-renowned San Diego Zoo is only one part of this magnificent 1,200-acre city park that was built for the 1915-1916 Panama-California Expo.
California's Hispanic roots were celebrated as the city erected breathtakingly ornate Spanish-style buildings, which were eventually permanently restored. So much more than just an urban park, it is home to the zoo, 14 museums, a pipe organ pavilion, botanical gardens, international cultural centers, theaters and performance venues, an antique carousel, off leash dog parks, sports fields, hiking trails, a tennis center, municipal pool, and a miniature-scale train. The December Nights Celebration is held the first weekend of December annually and this popular event is an opportunity for the whole family to enjoy pageants, plays, food and music all in the tradition of the Christmas holidays. © wcities.com



contact:

tel: +1 619 231 1515 fax: +1 619 231 0249 http://www.sandiegozoo.org

location:

2920 Zoo Dr San Diego CA 92103

hours:

Sept to mid-June daily 9am-4pm (grounds close at 5 or 6pm); mid-June to Aug daily 9am-8pm (grounds close at 9pm)



San Diego Zoo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Be prepared to walk - a lot!

DESCRIPTION: This world-famous establishment is clearly no ordinary zoo. Walk or ride a double-decker bus throughout this expansive park, home to over 4,000 rare and exotic animals exhibited in beautiful garden habitats. More than a park, this zoo is a major research facility although it is cleverly disguised with entertaining shows and inspiring exhibits like Polar Bear Plunge and Hippo Beach. General Admission required. © wcities.com



San Diego Zoo

contact:

tel: +1 619 221 8900 http://www.sandiego.gov/lifeg uards/beaches/mb.shtml

location:

Mission Bay channel entrance to the north end of Pacific Beach San Diego CA 92109



Mission Beach

DESCRIPTION: Near the manmade islands of Mission Bay, this beach runs along Mission Boulevard and boasts a fabulous boardwalk. One of the best places in San Diego to soak up the city's beach lifestyle, this is an unsurpassed area for people watching or building sandcastles. For a faster pace, rent a bike or in-line roller skates. Or better yet, take a ride on Belmont Park's world-famous wooden roller coaster. Whatever attraction you choose, be prepared for large crowds and limited parking. Dogs allowed on leashes before 9am and after 6pm. © wcities.com





contact:

tel: (619) 226-3900 http://www.seaworld.com/san diego/

location:

500 SeaWorld Drive San Diego California 92109



SeaWorld® San Diego

DESCRIPTION: Spend a full day exploring the awe-inspiring world of marine life at SeaWorld San Diego. Every encounter is a new adventure when you come face to face with the friendly dolphins, magnificent white beluga whales and playful penguins of SeaWorld San Diego. Experience life far under the sea as you feed dolphins, get up close to a polar bear and count the teeth on a shark! Of course, there's also the mythical rush of the Journey To Atlantis water coaster and Shamu - our biggest star both day and night in Believe and Shamu Rocks. See itinerary below for full descriptions of SeaWorld attractions. Special Offer - Book for travel in 2010 and receive unlimited admission for seven (7) consecutive days - BOOK NOW! © Viator



viator

contact:

tel: 619-557-5450 fax: 619-557-5469 www.nps.gov/cabr/

location:

1800 Cabrillo Memorial Drive San Diego CA 92106

hours

Daily 9am-5pm



Cabrillo National Monument

DESCRIPTION: Cabrillo National Monument sits high on the cliffs at the tip of Point Loma, and commands one of the most impressive views in all of San Diego of both the Pacific Ocean and San Diego Bay. It commemorates the landing of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the first European to set foot on what later became the west coast of the United States, at San Diego Bay in 1542. Highlights of the monument include the Old Point Loma Lighthouse, Fort Rosecrans coastal defense remains, a coastal sage scrub ecosystem and the Cabrillo Tidepools. The glass enclosed Robert J. Lagomarsino Visitor Center at this site offers a spectacular view of San Diego Bay, surrounding mountain ranges, as well as Tijuana and the Islas Coronados. Mexico. During the spring and fall migrations, several vantage points along the western portion of the monument provide excellent viewing of the gray whales passing through the area. The facility offers various programs and a small museum about Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, audio stations in six languages. The facilities are fully accessible.



contact:

tel: +1 619 238 1233 x802 fax: +1 619 685 5770 http://www.rhfleet.org/

location:

1875 El Prado San Diego CA 92101

hours:

Call for details



Reuben H Fleet Science Center & Space Theater

DESCRIPTION: These hands-on science and technology exhibits open a window into the future. Take a multi-sensory simulated space mission and encounter a rogue comet. Also onsite, the world's first Imax Theatre is a dome 10 times larger than a typical movie screen and the museum generally shows several films at a time. If all that activity and education makes you hungry, hop into the museum's Galileo Café for a snack or sandwich. © wcities.com



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contact:

tel: (760) 747-8702 http://www.sandiegozoo.org/p ark/

location:

15500 San Pasqual Valley Road San Diego California 92092



San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Make sure to get in a safari ride while there - it's the best attraction in the park!

DESCRIPTION: Inspired by the African Serengeti and the endless expanses of the Asian plains, the 1,800-acre San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park offers you an exotic safari adventure unlike any other outside of Africa itself. San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park is home to more than 3,500 rare and exotic animals - most of whom roam freely in vast enclosures. Witness a family of giraffe mingle among the gazelles and cranes while rhinos gather at a watering hole. Observe South African cheetahs lounging on a sunny hill or gaze into the eyes of the majestic California condor. Board the the Journey into Africa tour for a 45-minute tour past herds of elephants, zebras, and several endangered species. Venture into the dense forests and grassy savannas at the Heart of Africa, a 32 acre safari trail. Miles of walking trails lead guests to overlooks of lions, tigers and special encounters with exotic creatures. Stroll through Nairobi Village for shopping and dining. © Viator



viator



San Diego Snapshot

Local Info

Semi-tropical San Diego, with its mean temperature of 70 degrees, Mediterranean-like white-washed stucco buildings and strong cultural influences from southern neighbor Mexico, is as close to visiting a foreign country as visitors could get and yet, is as American as apple pie.

The heart of this bustling city lies at the foot of the harbor just minutes by car from Lindbergh Field, where most travelers debark. Spanning from the North County beach areas to the South Bay cities along the Mexican border, San Diego is one of the top ten largest cities in the United States, and while all of these areas fall under the San Diego umbrella, each individual community maintains its own personality, geography and identity. In San Diego's case, the whole is truly greater than the sum of its parts.

Downtown

Less than three miles from the airport is downtown proper. This thriving commercial area with its active waterfront is a bustling, colorful combination of major hotels, convention facilities, restaurants, nightclubs and shopping venues. Its focal point is Horton Plaza, an architectural masterpiece that holds trendy shops, lively restaurants, a movie theatre and even an ice rink during the holiday season. Horton is ideal for parking and within walking distance to any of the restaurants, shops or clubs just outside its walls.

Just east of Horton Plaza is theGaslamp District, a 16-block source of civic pride. Once slated for destruction, this area has been reclaimed by the people of San Diego thanks to the 1970s Redevelopment Plan. Where once dilapidated warehouses and run-down Victorian houses stood, and where no one dared to enter after dark, the Gaslamp District has now become the pulse of the city. The area even includes Balboa Theater, a historic venue that until recently was closed for reconstruction and now opens its doors for local plays, ballets and more.

Due west of downtown is the Embarcadero, a fun daytime location where visitors can take in leisurely views of the bay, hop aboard a harbor cruise(including the infamous"booze cruise" of the Bay, better known as theBahia Belle) and enjoy

seafood at its finest. For shopping, visit Seaport Village, a 14-acre shopping and dining complex designed to emulate early California-style architecture.

Balboa Park

No visit to San Diego would be complete without a trip to Balboa Park. Home to the world-famous San Diego Zoo, the park is much more than a beautiful place to see exotic animals. Gardens and grounds in Balboa Park were established as a city park for the people in 1868. In preparation for hosting the Panama-California Exposition of 1915, a celebration of the opening of the Panama Canal, founding fathers, architects and master gardeners collaborated to create the fine Spanish Colonial Revivalstyle buildings and gardens that still grace the grounds today. Additional buildings were raised on the site in the early 1930s, this time incorporating the look and feel of the Mayan civilization and California's early indigenous peoples. Within the confines of the park, visitors can enjoy scores of museums and art galleries including the Museum of Man, San Diego Museum of Art, Timken Museum of Art and Spreckel's Organ Pavilion(for a dollar saving Balboa Park experience, visit the park on the first Tuesday of any month, where admission to the museums are free).

Old Town

For a taste of what San Diego was like in its earliest years, take in the sights and sounds of this colorful settlement now preserved as a state historic park. Famous as the first European settlement in California, this area is also well known for its glorious yearround gardens, mouth-watering Mexican dishes, lilting Mariachi music and freeflowing margarita; though typically touristy. there are some true tortilla souls that can be found amongst all the trendy trinkets. Be sure to spend a little time browsing through Bazaar del Mundo, truly a marketplace of the world. While it might be typical to dine on Mexican cuisine inspired by the San Diego history, for an extravagant just a block from all the "fiesta" rush, Harney Sushi is a local favorite that flavors fish in unheard

Within easy walking distance from the center of Old Town is the Presidio, a mustsee while in San Diego. This structure, now a historic landmark, is where Junipero Serra established the first of the Spanish missions in California.

La Jolla

A short drive up the coast takes visitors to La Jolla, "the jewel" in Spanish. Despite its dense population, the people of this affluent city have somehow managed to maintain its natural beauty. Cliffs along the main streets overlook the beaches and coves along the Pacific Ocean; tropical vegetation creeps and climbs across redtiled roofs and verandas: and sunsets at La Jolla Shores are simply spectacular. Enjoy the village's serene center, where fish restaurants, chic boutiques and La Jolla locals are in abundance, likeGeorge's at the Cove- famous for their modern, American ambiance and cuisine- as well as Warwick's Books, ideal for every school/project need.

Beyond breathtaking oceanfront scenery, which can be enjoyed on bike, by walking or just by driving along La Jolla Boulevard, this seaside community is also home to the Birch Aquarium, which features the largest oceanographic display in the United States. Just up the hill from the town center, the Aquarium is located just across the street from theUniversity of California, San Diego, whose 25,000 university students make up the majority of the area.

North County

Travel a few miles further north along the coastal drive to reachDel Mar, a smaller beach community that supports itself with farmer's markets, surfers and restaurants. Famous for its racetrack founded by Bing Crosby and fellow Hollywood cronies during the 1940s, this seaside town offers as much to families as it does to racing aficionados. Beaches here are clean and family friendly: boutiques and open-air restaurants line the main street, giving it a Riviera-like quality. The city even boasts the newL'Auberge, which took over the Hollywood favorite resort Stratford Inn and remains a residence for socialites and affluent guests year round in Del Mar's average 70 degree temperature.

Moving inland, the city of Escondido is a quieter, more rural version of San Diego, replete with avocado and livestock ranches, vineyards and granite-strewn hillsides. The community hosts the San Diego Zoo's 2,200-acre Wild Animal Park, an extension of the city's world-famous zoo providing



San Diego Snapshot continued

visitors a look at animals in the wild.Bates Nut Farm is another rare feature for the area, where visitors from around the county enjoy the biggest pumpkin patch as well as hundreds of vast acres open to the public to enjoy while snacking on delicious nuts.

Just north of this city, visitors can find the renownCarlsbad Flower Fields andLEGOLAND California, great for those with young children in tow. Carlsbad's beaches also offers big time surfers some of the best waves in the area, where locals are always welcome.

South Bay

Visitors would be remiss if they never traveled south from the city proper into the area referred to as the South Bay. The main city in this area isChula Vista, home to one of San Diego's greatest music and entertainment venues, the Coors Amphitheatre. This entertainment complex provides state-of-the-art acoustics, VIP tables complete with cocktail table service, stadium seating and picnic seating on grassy knolls. Adjacent to the amphitheater, visitors(and especially their children) can cool off in the watery fun at Knott's Soak City U.S.A.

The most renaissance of the south bay cities has become North Park, a relatively untapped area that is now home to some of the area's most unique restaurants, live music venues, bars/ nightclubs and more. Just a shuffle inland and you'll find a hubbub of activity on 30th Avenue that houses local bars- like theBar Pink Cocktail Lounge- and the hidden Italian adventureAlexander's on 30th.

While each district of San Diego has an original flair, the various sections blend seamlessly into a thriving, cosmopolitan city. From the North County beaches to the downtown shopping districts, San Diego's first-class attractions consistently please tourists and locals alike.

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History

While today San Diego is recognized for its picturesque beaches, family friendly activities and historical landmarks, during 20,000 BC the area was home to some of the richest herds of Caribou, bison and more. Eventually the natives most commonly referred to as the San Dieguito

people began culturing the area just east ofRancho Santa Fe; descendants from the area moved toLa Jolla(commonly referred to as La Jollan peoples) and established themselves around San Diego's modern dayLa Jolla Beach and Tennis Club. Named after the Catholic Saint Didacus, more often referred by his nickname San Diego, by Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602, the area was actually originally"San Miguel" by Spain's explorer Juan Rodriquez Cabrillo. With Cabrillo's death just a few months later, San Miguel(today's Point Loma) was no longer under Spain's flagship and Vizcaino took over.

The area, Point Loma and Mission Bay, had been inhabited by Kumeyaay Indians for 10,000 years. Plans to Christianize the area started immediately, as threats from "alta California" begin to loom. Father Junipero Serra – the infamous leader and founder of"El Camino Real" - began establishing theMission San Diego de Alcala, which marked the end of his famous California mission trail. The missionary crew got help by several European ships and two land groups, all of whom established camp in today'sOld Town. The colonization was completed by 1797 when San Diego's Mission welcomed California's largest number of occupants. When Mexico won its independence from Spain, San Diego("baja California") fell under the rule of the reigning country; the Presidio Hills welcomed some of the first residents to the area while California followed command under Mexico.

By 1825 San Diego is named the unofficial capital of both lower and upper California and just ten years later the first mayor was elected. That same year seaman Richard Henry Dana stepped onto San Diego's land following detailed accounts of his time at sea. The Mexican-American War ensues, finishing up in a bloody battle in today's Escondido. By 1850, just three years after California's brutal win against Mexico, San Diego is named one of 27 original California counties - spanning as far east as the Colorado River into modernday's Imperial County and the cities San Bernardino and Riverside. The city's first mayor is elected that year, whileCabrillo Monument's iconic image is captured for the first time on paper.

San Diego, now with a little more than 700 in its city, establishes the Weekly Union, which in just a few short years will become the San Diego Union-Tribune following mergers of the Union and Evening Tribune. John D. Spreckels is the paper's sole owner, who manages the business until 1928. Prominent businessmanAlonzo Horton begins building the first wharf in the area in 1869 and later goes on to become one of the wealthiest men in the area — owning several blocks in today's downtown San Diego, among other establishments.

Gold rush hits San Diego in 1870, where mines produce\$2 million in gold(though the industry only lasts for another six years). The city continues to grow in population, nearly doubling in size as the city directory is published and theSan Diego Society of Natural History is established. Typical city institutions finally begin to fashion a growing commerce with the establishment of several organizations like the Russ School, which will eventually be taught byKate Sessions. When the transcontinental railroad reaches San Diego in 1885 the area begins promoting one of its most feasible resources - itself(today tourism makes up one of San Diego's biggest money-makers). The first tourists come just as construction for the Hotel del Coronado begins, welcoming guests in 1886 following the peninsula's acquisition by Elisha S. Babcock and H.L. Story.

Sessions, who began establishing a nursery upon her arrival to San Diego, purchases 36 acres of "City Park" which before long becomes known as Balboa Park. Eventually buildings are constructed inBalboa Park as San Diego hosts the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, while a large Organ Pavilion donated by residentSpreckles is also added to the venue. San Diego's now world famousSan Diego Zoo is created only after Dr. Harry Wegeforth, who hoped to quarantine animals for the 1915 Expo, petitioned for a permanent park.

Today'sSan Diego State University opened up as the State Normal School in 1899 in Normal Heights as a two year training college. Just four years later theScripps Institution of Oceanography is established by University of California Zoology Professor William E. Ritter and



San Diego Snapshot continued

Ellen Browning Scripps. Not before too long the University of San Diego is founded in Linda Vista(1954), followed merely a decade later by the University of California, San Diego in La Jolla.

San Diego becomes a Mecca for entertainment, with the 1929 establishment of the Fox Theatre, a prominent movie house and current home to the San Diego Symphony(Copley Symphony Hall) along with Balboa Park's Fine Arts Gallery. These mark just one of many that improve San Diego's artistic endeavors, withDel Mar Fairgrounds construction through a Work Progress Authority project and the San Diego's Civic Center debut.

The San Diego Padres moved from minor-league to Major League in 1968, opening up their season at the new San Diego Stadium(which would eventually becomePetco Park. Sports become more prominent in the area beyond baseball with Escondido's Olympic training venue opening and the Super Bowl held inQualcomm Stadium.

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Nightlife Insights

Art

Nightclubs

Theater

Film

Music

Sports

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Travel Tips Getting There

Air

San Diego International Airport(SAN)+1 619 400 2400http://www.san.org

SAN is located three miles from downtown and services the following airlines:

Aero Mexico(+1 800 237 6639/ http:// www.aeromexico.com) Alaska Airlines(+ 1 800 426 0333/ http://www.alaskaair.com) Aloha Airlines(+1800 367 5250/ http:// www.alohaairlines.com) American Airlines(+ 1 800 433 7300/ http:// www.aa.com) Continental(+1 800 525 0280/ http://www.continental.com) Delta(+1 800 221 1212/ http://www.delta.com) Hawaiian Airlines(+1 800 367 5320/ http:// www.hawaiianair.com) Jet Blue(+1 800 538 2583/ http://www.jetblue.com) Northwest(+1 800 225 2525/ http://www.nwa.com) Southwest(+1 800 434 9792/ http:// www.southwest.com) United(+1 800 241 6522/ http://www.ual.com) US Airways(+1 800 428 4322/ http://www.usairways.com)

From the Airport

Bus: There is public transportation to and from the airport via bus on Flyer Route no. 992.

Shuttle: There are also a number of taxis and shuttle services that offer airport transit including:

Airport Shuttle(+1 619 234 4403) Yellow Cab(+1 619 234 6161/ http:// www.driveu.com) San Diego Cab(+1 619 226 8294)

Car Rental: Alamo(+1 800 327 9633/ http://www.alamo.com) Avis(+1 800 831 2847/ http://www.avis.com) Enterprise(1+ 800 736 8227/ http://www.enterprise.com/car_rental/home.do) Flexcar(+1 619 262 3539/ http://www.flexcar.com/undergrad) Budget(+1 800 527 0700/ http://www.budget.com) Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/ http://www.hertz.com) Thrifty(+1 800 367 2277/ http://www.thrifty.com)

Car Share

Another attractive ground transportation option is Flexcar, which operates in certain U.S. cities. This new breed of rental car allows you to rent on an hourly basis rather than a daily basis. Be sure to register online before your trip. Flexcar(+1 877 353 9227/ http://www.flexcar.com)

Train

Amtrak(+1 800 872 7245/ http://www.amtrak.com) offers frequent services to San Diego.

Bus

San Diego is serviced by Greyhound(+1 800 231 2222/ http://www.greyhound.com) bus lines which provide transportation to destinations throughout America.

Car

San Diego is accessible by I-5, I-15, and US 15.

Getting Around

Public Transit

The Metropolitan Transit System(MTS, 1+ 619 238 0100/ http://www.sdcommute.com) offers a comprehensive system of buses, trolleys, light rail trains, and commuter trains to destinations throughout San Diego.

N.B. If traveling overseas, take the safety precaution of registering your trip athttps://travelregistration.state.gov and for helpful, practical advice about traveling technicalities and safety standards check outhttp://travel.state.gov/

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Fun Facts

San Diego State: California Country: United States

San Diego by the Numbers:

Population: 1.25 million Average Winter Temperature: 60 degrees F/15.5 degrees C Average Summer Temperature: 71 degrees F/22 degrees C

Quick Facts:

Electricity: 110 volts, 60Hz, standard two pin plugs Time Zone: GMT-8 Country Dialing Code: 1 Area Codes: 619, 760, 858

Did You Know?

From San Diego, you canwalk across the border to Mexico!

Ever heard of a Zambian Sable Antelope? Well, the world-famous San Diego Zoo has one!

Orientation:

San Diego is located 120 miles south of Los Angeles and 20 miles north of Tijuana, Mexico.

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